

Support Our Troops

Question

What can I do to support our troops?

Answer:

Thank you for thinking of our troops! Thousands of Americans are asking what they can do to show their support for servicemembers, especially those serving overseas in this time of war.

Highlighted below is a new program started by a Washington State mother who wants to make sure soldiers - who don't have families back home - know they are remembered and that their sacrifices are appreciated. In addition, links to several other nationwide programs are listed here

Adopt-A-Soldier Deployed in Iraq - 25th Infantry Division (Light)

As a mother of two soldiers serving in Iraq, I have heard the stories from my sons about soldiers standing for mail call every day, and every day nothing came. These are 18, 19 and 20-year olds like my sons. Both of my sons asked me to if I would send these soldiers goodies and letters so they would know that they have not been forgotten. It was an honor to support the other soldiers.

As a volunteer you have two options in participating:

I. Full Adoption

The Adopt-A-Soldier is a grassroots effort that provides morale-lifting mail and care packages to support soldiers deployed overseas. It is a commitment that requires sending a cheerful letter or card bi-weekly and a minimum monthly care package to your adopted soldier. More support can be sent as you desire.

II. Foster Care (Pen Pal)

The Foster Care Program is designed for those individuals, school children, and organizations wanting to write letters and send cards only. Children can participate under the supervision of an adult.

This is not a dating service and must stress that all mail be sent in the spirit of patriotism to lift morale. If you are interested in supporting a soldier in the 25th Infantry Division (Light) please contact Connie Michener at conniemoly@aol.com.

25th Infantry Division (Light) Reorganization History

In 1995, the Division underwent another reorganization and reduction as a part of the Army's downsizing. First Brigade and its direct support units were inactivated and moved to Fort Lewis, Wash., where they were again reactivated as a detached brigade of the 25th Infantry Division (Light).

Today the "Tropic Lightning" Division is composed of three infantry brigades (two in Hawaii; one at Fort Lewis), an Aviation Brigade, Division Artillery, a Division Support command and a complement of separate battalions. As a major ground reserve force for the U.S. Pacific Command, the "Tropic Lightning" Division routinely deploys from Schofield Barracks to participate in exercises in Japan, Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia and the Big Island of Hawaii.

Additionally, soldiers from 11 Pacific Basin nations annually come to Hawaii to participate in exchange programs with the 25th Infantry Division (Light) units. This program enhances the Division's interrelations with sister services and allied nations around the world.

All this leads to the Division's motto - earned more than 50 years ago but very much applicable today - Ready to Strike! Anytime. Anywhere.

Additional Opportunities:

The American Red Cross is launching Treasures for Troops, an exciting year round program that offers a way for Americans to brighten the day for deployed men and women in uniform serving overseas. You can provide troops with a gift from home with a \$20 donation to the American Red Cross Treasures for the Troops program. Details at: <http://www.trianglearc.org/afes/treasuresfortroops.htm>

Operation Hero Miles: In September 2003, the Pentagon started giving soldiers stationed in Iraq two-week leave periods in the largest R & R program since the Vietnam War; the soldiers can fly to Germany or Baltimore Washington International Airport for free, but they are responsible for the cost of flights to their final destination. Returning soldiers often have to purchase high-priced, last-minute airline tickets so they can spend time with their family. You can help American troops travel home to spend quality time with their loved ones. For more information, please see: <http://www.heromiles.org/index.html>

Contribute to **“Gifts from the Homefront”** Certificates from the Army Air Force Exchange System (AAFES). These allow you to send a gift certificate to a loved one, family member or friend associated with the military. These certificates are redeemable by authorized patrons of the PX/BX and are redeemable at all locations around the world including deployed areas. For more information, please see: <http://www.aafes.com/docs/homefront.htm>.

Donate to **“Operation USO Care Package”** at <http://www.usocares.org> .

The Gift of Groceries program at <http://www.commissaries.com/certifcheck/index.htm> helps meet the family needs of our Guard and Reserve troops fighting the war on terrorism.

Donate a calling card to help keep servicemembers in touch with their families at **Operation Uplink** at <http://www.operationuplink.org/>

Send a greeting via e-mail through **Operation Dear Abby** at <http://anyservicemember.navy.mil/> or www.OperationDearAbby.net

Sign a **virtual thank you card** at the Defend America Web site at <http://www.defendamerica.mil/nmam.html>

The “Stars and Stripes” newspaper includes a daily **“Messages of Support”** section giving family and friends of deployed service members a chance to pass along greetings, announcements, and words of encouragement. Such messages (LIMITED TO 50 WORDS OR LESS) will be printed on a first-come, first-run basis. Messages may be sent to: messages@stripes.com.

Make a donation to one of the military relief societies:

Army Emergency Relief at <http://www.aerhq.org/>

Navy/Marine Relief Society at <http://www.nmcrs.org/>

Air Force Aid Society at <http://www.afas.org/>

Coast Guard Mutual Assistance at <http://www.cgmahq.org/>

Special Operations Warrior Foundation at <http://www.specialops.org/contribute.html>

Support the American Red Cross Armed Forces Emergency Services at <http://www.redcross.org/services/afes/>

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors at <http://www.taps.org>

National Military Family Association at <http://www.nmfa.org>

Purchase a Patriot Bond at <http://www.ustreas.gov>

Volunteer at a VA Hospital to honor veterans who bore the lamp of freedom in past conflicts.

Reach out to military families in your community, especially those with a loved one overseas.

Please do not flood the military mail system with letters, cards, and gifts. Due to security concerns and transportation constraints, the Department cannot accept items to be mailed to “Any Servicemember.” Some people have tried to avoid this prohibition by sending large numbers of packages to an individual servicemember’s address, which however well intentioned, clogs the mail and causes unnecessary delays.

The support and generosity of the American people has touched the lives of the more than 300,000 service members deployed overseas.